CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for facilitating and controlling route-based delivery of orders for goods from a central servicing warehouse to a network of remote ship-to sites, comprising:

a manifesting system for implementing a manifesting process used to manage and document the location and status of the orders for goods, associated inventory of goods in the central servicing warehouse, and the hand-off at a ship-to site of custody of an order for goods between parties involved in the process.

2. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the manifesting process identifies and compiles into a draft manifest a logical grouping of all outstanding orders to be transported to ship-to sites on a specific route and which determines and documents which orders for goods are to go out on a next delivery truck for that specific route.

3. The system as recited in claim 2, wherein the manifesting process converts a draft manifest to a committed manifest, where the committed manifest becomes the official, permanent record of the orders for goods consigned to the truck for that run on that specific route, when it is determined that the draft manifest record accurately reflects the orders for goods to be loaded on the truck.

4. The system as recited in claim 3, wherein the manifesting process posts the committed manifest record into an order management system of a vendor to update records to reflect that the orders for goods have left the central servicing warehouse and are on route to remote ship-to sites.

5. The system as recited in claim 3, wherein the manifesting process posts the committed manifest record into an inventory management system of a vendor to reflect that the orders for goods is now under the control of a driver of that truck.

6. The system as recited in claim 3, wherein the manifesting process communicates the committed manifest to an inventory control system at ship-to sites on the route for that truck to advise the inventory control systems of the orders for goods to expect on the next delivery.

7. The system as recited in claim 6, wherein the manifesting process electronically transmits sensitive supporting information concerning the committed manifest to the inventory control system at ship-to sites on the route for that truck to simplify and speed up acceptance and put-away of orders for goods; reduce time, cost and error of manual data entry; and to reduce risk of theft.

8. The system as recited in 7, wherein the inventory control system of the ship-to sites logically checks off each order for goods, as it is tendered by the driver, against a list of orders for goods it is expecting as indicated by the committed manifest and advises whether orders for goods are either not expected or missing.

9. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the inventory control system automatically generates and sends a communication alert to a supervisor or a security monitoring system when an inventory control system detects orders for goods that are either not expected or missing.

10. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the inventory control system of a ship-to site transmits delivery results to the manifesting system so that inventory records of the manifesting system may be updated to reflect that the orders for goods have been received at the ship-to site and are available for pick up by a customer at that location.

11. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the manifesting process requires a customer to identify themselves appropriately at a ship-to site using a previously determined PIN or ORN in order to be allowed access to an order for goods.

12. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the inventory control system of the ship-to sites provides the customer with an opportunity to inspect the goods to accept or reject an order for goods.

13. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the inventory control system of the ship-to sites reports back an acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer to the manifesting system so that order status and inventory records may be updated.

14. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the manifesting system causes billing of the customer in response to receiving a notification of the acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer.

15. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the manifesting system causes a debiting of a customer account in response to receiving a notification of the acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer.

16. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the inventory control system of a ship-to site initiates a goods return process for rejected orders, returned goods, abandoned deliveries, or empty containers by creating a to-be-returned reverse logistics order in the manifesting system which functions to notify a vendor to expect the goods for receipt back at the central servicing warehouse.

17. The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the manifesting process responds to a to-be-returned logistics order by scheduling a driver to pick up the goods to be returned on a next visit to the ship-to site.

18. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein inventory control system at a ship-to site records a time the driver picks up the goods to be returned and notifies the manifesting system of the time.

19. The system as recited in claim 18, wherein receipt of the goods to be returned is confirmed by the central servicing warehouse and entered into the manifesting system.

20. The system as recited in claim 2, wherein the manifesting system facilitates and controls route-based delivery of orders for goods by using an order cut-off time for all the ship-to sites on a specific delivery routes whereby customers will know a time by which to place an order for goods to ensure delivery at their chosen ship-to site within a given time frame.

21. The system as recited in claim 20, where the draft manifest is generated automatically in response to attaining the cut-off time for that route.

22. A method for facilitating and controlling route-based delivery of orders for goods from a central servicing warehouse to a network of remote ship-to sites, comprising:

managing and documenting the location and status of the orders for goods, associated inventory of goods in the central servicing warehouse, and the hand-off at a ship-to site of custody of an order for goods between parties by means of a manifesting process wherein the manifesting process identifies and compiles into a draft manifest a logical grouping of all outstanding orders to be transported to ship-to sites on a specific route and which determines and documents which orders for goods are to go out on a next delivery truck for that specific route.

23. The method as recited in claim 22, comprising converting a draft manifest to a committed manifest, where the committed manifest becomes the official, permanent record of the orders for goods consigned to the truck for that run on that specific route, when it is determined that the draft manifest record accurately reflects the orders for goods to be loaded on the truck.

24. The method as recited in claim 23, comprising posting the committed manifest record into an order management system of a vendor to update records to reflect that the orders for goods have left the central servicing warehouse and are on route to remote ship-to sites.

25. The method as recited in claim 23, comprising posting the committed manifest record into an inventory management system of a vendor to reflect that the orders for goods is now under the control of a driver of that truck.

26. The method as recited in claim 23, comprising communicating the committed manifest to an inventory control system at ship-to sites on the route for that truck to advise the inventory control systems of the orders for goods to expect on the next delivery.

27. The method as recited in claim 26, comprising electronically transmitting sensitive supporting information concerning the committed manifest to the inventory control system at ship-to sites on the route for that truck to simplify and speed up acceptance and

put-away of orders for goods; reduce time, cost and error of manual data entry; and to reduce risk of theft.

28. The method as recited in 27, wherein the inventory control system of the ship-to sites logically checks off each order for goods, as it is tendered by the driver, against a list of orders for goods it is expecting as indicated by the committed manifest and advises whether orders for goods are either not expected or missing.

29. The method as recited in claim 28, wherein the inventory control system automatically generates and sends a communication alert to a supervisor or a security monitoring system when an inventory control system detects orders for goods that are either not expected or missing.

30. The method as recited in claim 28, wherein the inventory control system of a ship-to site transmits delivery results to the manifesting system so that inventory records of the manifesting system may be updated to reflect that the orders for goods have been received at the ship-to site and are available for pick up by a customer at that location.

31. The method as recited in claim 22, comprising requiring a customer to identify themselves appropriately at a ship-to site using a previously determined PIN or ORN in order to be allowed access to an order for goods.

32. The method as recited in claim 26, comprising providing the customer with an opportunity to inspect the goods to accept or reject an order for goods.

33. The method as recited in claim 32, comprising reporting to the manifesting system an acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer so that order status and inventory records may be updated.

34. The method as recited in claim 33, wherein the manifesting system causes billing of the customer in response to receiving a notification of the acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer.

35. The method as recited in claim 33, wherein the manifesting system causes a debiting of a customer account in response to receiving a notification of the acceptance and removal of an order for goods by the customer.

36. The method as recited in claim 33, comprising initiating a goods return process for rejected orders, returned goods, abandoned deliveries, or empty containers by creating a to-be-returned reverse logistics order in the manifesting system which functions to notify a vendor to expect the goods for receipt back at the central servicing warehouse.

37. The method as recited in claim 34, wherein the manifesting process responds to a to-be-returned logistics order by scheduling a driver to pick up the goods to be returned on a next visit to the ship-to site.

38. The method as recited in claim 35, comprising recording a time the driver picks up the goods to be returned and notifying the manifesting system of the time.

39. The method as recited in claim 36, comprising confirming receipt of the goods to be returned at the central servicing warehouse and entering information concerning the return into the manifesting system.

40. The method as recited in claim 33, comprising facilitating control of route-based delivery of orders for goods by using an order cut-off time for all the ship-to sites on a specific delivery routes whereby customers will know a time by which to place an order for goods to ensure delivery at their chosen ship-to site within a given time frame.

41. The method as recited in claim 40, comprising generating the draft manifest in response to attaining the cut-off time for that route.